

**Making Value, Making Meaning:
Techné in the Pre-Columbian World**

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Claudia Brittenham and Diana Magaloni Kerpel, *The Eloquence of Color: Material and Meaning in the Cacaxtla Murals*. This paper examines how materials constitute meaning in the murals of Cacaxtla, a Central Mexican city-state which flourished during the Epiclassic period between AD 650-950. Drawing on technical analyses by Diana Magaloni, we present evidence that the painting technique of Cacaxtla synthesizes different Mesoamerican traditions in ways comparable to the stylistic and iconographic synthesis of the paintings, in order to demonstrate that the Cacaxtla painting tradition is a distinctive local practice. We then consider select examples of the iconography of color in the murals. The choice of hues and pigments can create rhetorical parallels: at the Red Temple, for example, maize, jade, and quetzal feathers are all painted with a precious Maya blue pigment. But color can also be used to make vitally important distinctions, as when victors and vanquished in the Battle Mural are painted using completely different pigments. We conclude with reflections about the implications of these deeply significant material choices, sometimes invisible to the naked eye, for models about the making, patronage, and reception of Mesoamerican art.

Michael G. Callaghan, *Production, Form, Technology, and Performance: Examining Ceramic Social Valuables of the Preclassic Maya Lowlands*. During the Late Classic period in the Maya Lowlands, a specific class of painted ceramic vessels played an important role in materializing power relations among elites, maintaining regional political economies, and legitimating elite authority both in terms of the larger social spectrum and among elites themselves. Using a combination of stylistic, epigraphic, and chemical compositional analyses, these ceramic vessels have been extensively studied by scholars in the recent past and have enriched our understanding of the ceramic production process, elite exchange, and how a specific subset of the Late Classic population created and was, in turn, influenced by the products they produced. However, the Late Classic period represents a distinct phase within the greater trajectory of Maya culture-history. Polychrome ceramics of the Late Classic tradition did not exist in the antecedent Preclassic and Early Classic periods, nor were they exemplified by what could be considered highly valued ceramic material of the proceeding Terminal Classic and Postclassic periods. In this paper, I build upon the studies of scholars working on Late Classic period ceramic material and identify key elements in the creation of value in ceramics found in prestigious contexts of the Late Preclassic through Early Classic periods in the Maya Lowlands. I specifically demonstrate how form, production techniques, the organization of production, and use in ritual performance together contributed to the value of prestige-enhancing ceramics in the culture-historical phases preceding the Late Classic period.

Cathy L. Costin, *Crafting Identities Deep and Broad*. In this paper, I explore the multiple means by which meaning and value were imbued in emblematic objects that communicated identity, authority, power, and (likely) resistance on the North Coast of Peru after the region was conquered by the Inka empire. At the center of the analysis are a specific type of ceramic vessel

that systematically hybridized local and imperial forms, designs, and technologies. The evidence indicates that these Chimú-Inka hybrid vessels were made by local artisans recruited to work in state-supervised workshops, likely as part of the labor tax imposed by the Inka. The vessels are intriguing because artisans combined local and imperial attributes in specific ways, suggesting complex webs of technical and iconological (*sensu* Panofsky) knowledge deployed to create vessels with very specific messages about identity and hierarchy in the emergent Inka imperial order. These emblematic objects represent the complex discourse on identity through their systematic incorporation of specific Inka and Chimú attributes and their function as representations of dressed bodies. Thus, the interpretation of these vessels rests on a further analysis of textiles—the principal indicators of identity in the Andes—and representations of textiles on ceramics, which are more plentiful than actual textiles. Not only is there a strong concordance between the Chimú-Inka ceramic designs and Chimú textile designs, but both have strong antecedents in North Coast textiles (and ceramics) from nearly a thousand or more years earlier. Thus, the designs—key emblems of identity—have a deep, local history and represent “autochthonic” power and identity. The local technology used is also quite ancient, while the specific form of these vessels—the iconic aríbalo—is unique to the Inka state. The sum of the evidence suggests that the nature of the hybridization reflects a specific set of highly conscious integrating and assimilating mechanisms, ones which simultaneously incorporated conquered non-Inka elites into the larger imperial social hierarchy and reinforced their distinctiveness from and subordination to ethnically Inka nobles and bureaucrats. Artisans captured and materialized the push-pull of co-option into the conquering state: the Inka redefined identity, but local lords must have been part of the negotiation. In sum, all aspects of skilled crafting—the deployment of technique, artisan identity and the organization of production, form, and style—contributed to these objects’ meaning and played a key role in the negotiations that took place in this example of imperial spread.

Lisa DeLeonardis, *Encoded Process, Embodied Meaning in Paracas Post-Fired Ceramics*. Among the pre-Hispanic Andean societies celebrated for their visual arts, the Paracas (ca. 900 BC–AD 1) of the southern coast of Peru are distinguished for their remarkable embroidered textiles and painted and incised ceramics. The Paracas valued a range of qualities in the substance of craft— texture, color, translucency, and luminosity—and went to great lengths to acquire materials that enhanced the creation of prestige objects. Meaning was vested in the mediums that constituted works, yet the process of transforming materials was equally important, as attested by the rich visual record in which esoteric and shared knowledge were expressed in the woven, the carved, and the painted. The archaeological record is clear that the many works of Paracas—in stone, fiber, hide, bone, and clay—were produced in small-scale workshops, while prestige items appear to be the work of collective hands, as suggested by the master-apprentice mode posited for the production of elaborate cloths. Our awareness of the finest textiles and sculptural ceramics belies the observed variation in quality and execution, suggesting differential expertise at work and raising questions about the social organization of artists. My paper examines the processes involved in the creation of painted and incised ceramics and the social organization of ceramicists responsible for cult objects (masks, effigies and specialized forms beyond the purview of everyday use). Among a constellation of design techniques, post-fired paint applied to incised pottery resulted in a vibrant color palette otherwise impossible to achieve through conventional methods. Post-fired paint figured in the structure and meaning of ceramic design and form while affecting vulnerability in the use of the finished object. Indeed, the

precarious nature of the paint may have been a desirable quality. The creation of painted and incised ceramics required an understanding of design conventions as well as a knowledge of paint and binders that bordered on alchemy. I argue that successful objects—those most favored for ritual use broadly defined—were by the hand of a master artist. I elaborate on how mastery is defined and offer insights into the skills and range of expertise valued in the context of Paracas ceramic design and production and, by extension, the society at large.

Christina T. Halperin, *Textile Techné: Classic Maya Translucent Cloth and the Making of Value*. The most noted luxury clothing of the Classic-period Maya includes rich brocades, netted jade skirts and capes, and elaborately embroidered or painted textiles. Often excluded from scholarly analysis are whisper thin and slightly translucent textiles. These open-spaced and gauze textiles defy many typical considerations of how crafts accrue value, such as through extraordinary amounts of labor, esoteric knowledge required for their production, the use of exotic or highly valued raw materials, or the semiotic encoding of complicated messages. This paper argues that the value of translucent textiles was tied to feminine technical skills and bodily performances that highlight notions of power, agency, and simplicity. As such, it refocuses notions of value from a product of elite control to a more socially diverse and embodied perspective.

Stephen Houston, *Carving Credit: Authorship among Classic Maya Sculptors*. In the mid-1980s, David Stuart recognized sculptors' names on stelae of the Classic Maya. Such records imply a social decision to accord naming rights to carvers and a conceptual predetermination that the identity of the sculptor was important to sculpting and subsequent display. Over one hundred signatures are known, with tight temporal focus in the Late and Terminal Classic periods, a span of little more than a few centuries. This paper offers a comprehensive study of patterned naming, delving into its varied motivations. The basic inquiry is to understand why authored inscription was thought necessary, what its contents and disposition show about carving and carvings, and how this evidence reveals much about the literate and courtly setting that led to signed work.

John Janusek and Patrick Ryan Williams, *Tectonic Techné and the Coordinated Production of Tiwanaku Monumentality*. Stone configured Tiwanaku construction and defined Tiwanaku as a place and a people. This paper presents ongoing geoarchaeological research into the lithic production of Tiwanaku monumentality. Monumental stone production was critical to Tiwanaku's consolidation as a prestigious urban ceremonial center. Emergent technologies of lithic production and construction encompassed extensive operational chains of stone quarrying, transportation, carving, and emplacement. Specific tasks in these chains, as well as the different types of stone employed to construct Tiwanaku monuments, required diverse communities that excelled in specific skills and technical practices. These multiple groundbreaking technologies, and in particular their coordination among so many specialized communities, constituted Tiwanaku as an emergent ritual-political phenomenon and propelled its political prestige during the Andean Middle Horizon.

Blanca Maldonado, *New World Metallurgy: A Comparative Study of Copper Production in the South Central Andes and West Mexico*. The development of technology in the New World followed its own path, both similar and different from that of the Old World. The knowledge of metallurgy and metalworking evolved and spread over much of the area occupied by high

civilizations in the Americas. Having emerged in the Andean region of South America, metallurgy seems to have transferred from south to north, as far as Mesoamerica, where it developed into local technological traditions. Copper and its alloys have shown to be the material of choice for most Pre-Columbian metallurgical industries. These materials were fashioned mainly as ornaments used in religious ceremonies and for the enhancement of elite cultural status. The archaeometallurgical record for this vast region, however, is fragmentary and dispersed. Most of the available information on metallurgical processes is based on metallographic analyses of finished products and, thus, is often restricted to the final stages of production. The present paper attempts to comparatively study the complete metallurgical operational chain (including ore sources, mining technology, mineral processing, and extractive metallurgy) and to structure the interactions among these aspects of production in different regions in South America and Mesoamerica, with an emphasis on the South Central Andes and West Mexico.

Jerry D. Moore and Carolina Vilchez, *Techné and the Thorny Oyster: Spondylus Craft Production and the Inca Empire at Taller Conchales, Cabeza de Vaca, Tumbes, Peru*. The creation of objects from the lustrous shells of the thorny oyster (*Spondylus princeps*) and the large rock oyster (*Spondylus calcifer*) was an important focus of embodied craft for over five millennia in Andean South America. The transformation of *Spondylus* into beads, pendants, and other objects underwent fundamental shifts in volume and focus in late prehistory, with major reorganizations occurring circa AD 1470 as the Inca Empire expanded into northern South America, including the shift from craft production in domestic contexts to the establishment of formal and specialized workshops. Excavations in 2011 at the site of Taller Conchales—a sector of the Inca provincial center Cabeza de Vaca in Tumbes, Peru— have resulted in detailed insights into *Spondylus* craft production. Taller Conchales contains the only known *Spondylus* workshop directly associated with the Inca Empire, and data from the site enables us to document the decisions and assessments by craft workers as they transformed shells into highly desired objects, thus providing a unique perspective into the *techné* of craft production in the Inca Empire.

Laura Filloy Nadal, *Lustrous Surfaces, Greenstones, and Votive Offerings in Mesoamerica*. This paper focuses on the material properties and manufacturing techniques used in Mesoamerica to convert selected metamorphic raw materials into valuable and significant objects invested with cultural significance. The manufacture of these objects is conceived as an embodiment of creation, using acquired skills and procedures performed by lapidary craftsmen and artists in Mesoamerica through time: from the Preclassic period (Offering 4 from La Venta, a group of sixteen figurines and six celts) to the Classic period with examples from Teotihuacan and the Mayan area (Palenque, Calakmul, Oxkintok, and Dzibanché). I will also discuss the provenance, distinctive characteristics (color, shine, and sound), and significance of the range of hard lustrous objects found in funerary and votive offering contexts.

Carlos Rengifo, *Shaping Local and Regional Identities: The Artisans of the Moche Period, Peru*. Moche craft production has traditionally been approached from a monolithic model. Current studies, however, consider the Moche as a set of heterogeneous social units with varying degrees of cohesion and fragmentation. This paper discusses how this new paradigm questions the passive role conventionally attributed to producers. It explores and compares the cases of

workshops and graves from Huacas de Moche, San José de Moro, and Cerro Castillo, the latter a pluriethnic settlement in the Nepeña Valley. The paper examines pottery styles and other aspects of material culture to suggest that the production and circulation of both symbolic and utilitarian artefacts can be seen as expressions of deliberate political actions made by artisans that sought to reinforce, deny, or contest a number of competing identities.

Alessandra Russo, *Overseas Apelles: Ancient Technes, New Artists, and the Birth of Another Literature of Art in the Sixteenth-century*. This paper will address how the pre-Hispanic and post-conquest artistic practices are described in the writings of conquistadors, missionaries, travelers, historians, and collectors. I will discuss these sources within a larger corpus of texts devoted to different parts of the Iberian expansion. In fact, while numerous authors praise the intricate beauty of the artifacts found in the Americas (and their transformations in the sixteenth-century), other authors attentively describe the objects, techniques and aesthetics encountered in other parts of the world—Asia, Africa, and Europe itself. Instead of reading these texts as anecdotic samples of a proto-ethnography, I claim that they were part of a polyphonic “literature of art” of the Renaissance and that they offered, in the sixteenth-century, new theoretical insights not only on the origins of the arts or the antiquity of the world but also on what makes an object contemporaneous and potentially eternal.

Lisa Trever, *Craft or Anti-Craft? On the Artistry of Moche Mural Painting*. Recent technical and material studies in Moche art history and archaeology have demonstrated highly developed craft traditions that may speak to ancient Andean philosophies akin to the Greek *techné*. In this paper, I present a counter example. In my study of the working processes, techniques, and materials of late Moche (ca. 600–900 CE) mural painting at Pañamarca and elsewhere on the North Coast of Peru, I find the famous Moche attention to craft to be surprisingly absent. At Pañamarca, the site’s designers’ and architects’ desires for expeditious elaboration of visual content often seem to have trumped more focused investment in the craft of painting. Dripped paint and uneven plastered surfaces evidence the haste with which many paintings were executed, as artistry was subsumed by rapid generation of visual effect. Many of the painted temple walls are also marked with so-called graffiti. In this paper, I present the artistic and archaeological evidence and offer some possible explanations for these phenomena. By parsing the degrees and types of artistry located within different genres, we might come to appreciate more fully intracultural philosophies of art, craft, and image in ancient Peru. Not all media were created equally, nor perhaps with the same guiding principles in mind.

Colleen Zori, *Valuing the Local: Inka Metal Production in the Tarapacá Valley of Northern Chile*. Although gold, silver, and copper had fundamental cosmological and political importance to the Inka, imperial conceptualizations of these metals may not have been shared by provincial peoples. Using the Tarapacá Valley of northern Chile as a case study, I investigate how different perceptions of the inherent value of metals and minerals between the Inka and the local people of Tarapacá shaped the reorganization of metals production after incorporation. I first explore how the Inka restructured ore extraction, bringing people from the Tarapacá Valley to work at the nearby Huantajaya silver mines. As earlier local metallurgy had focused on copper, the reorientation of mining efforts reflects the imposed economic demands of the imperial value system. Silver-bearing ores were then refined in the Tarapacá Valley. Survey and excavation data document the centralization of metallurgical production at the administrative center of

Tarapacá Viejo, an increase in the scale of metal production, and intensification in food and drink preparation suggestive of ritualized hospitality. While there is evidence for the production and use of finished copper and tin bronze objects, silver was appropriated directly by the empire and removed from local circulation. In addition to traditional Andean norms of reciprocity and feasting, the Inka encouraged local people to participate in this new production system through provisioning of ground blue minerals. These blue minerals played a key role in offerings made near burials, on mountain tops, and along camelid caravan routes. Recent work at other Chilean Inka mining complexes indicates a focus on extracting such blue minerals. I suggest that these blue minerals had relatively little value to the Inka, but were of great significance to the inhabitants of the Tarapacá Valley. Co-opting this local system of value may have allowed the empire to obtain the resources it desired while simultaneously placating local interests.